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Chinese Pottery From the Philippines

II.

ENTIRELY apart from the celedons¹ excavated by the Hon. Dean C. Worcester in the Philippine Islands is a group of a dozen small potteries and a large number of fragments which deserve special notice, even though our knowledge of them is fragmentary at best. It is earnestly hoped that Mr. Worcester himself, on his return to the Islands, will find further material to shed light on these discoveries, and that in the meantime scholars of the subject may be stimulated to assist in our investigation.

Of this non-celedon group one at least can immediately be determined as belonging to the group of *Ting* wares and presumably to the *Tu Tings* produced after the removal of the industry to Ching-te-Chen. That it has all the characteristics which we associate with the developed wares of late Sung does not prove its date. In form it is the shallow bottom of a covered bowl or box in which a lady may have kept her rouge or sweetmeats. It is decorated with lotus petals, faintly in relief, beneath the white translucent glaze. These delicate ridges were either drawn on the body with a brush full of white slip or produced by pressing the piece in a mould or bat in which the design had been incised. It was baked on its base, unlike the finest wares of the Ting Chow kilns, which are said to have been inverted in the kiln that the feet might be glazed. No doubt the cover was supported while baking by little stilts from the lip of the box as was frequently done by the Koreans in making similar white boxes. The glaze, creamy in consistency and tint, is covered by a fine craze in which, during the course of centuries, color has by degrees been deposited, giving the whole a still yellower tone. If the Orientals are right, this delicate net work of cracks, not obvious at the first glance, gradually multiplies and spreads its ramifications with the shrinking and expansion of the body till the interstices of the glaze are as minute as the cracks themselves. Some Chinese believe that an estimate of the age of the object may be formed on the basis of the stage which this subdivision has reached, but such speculation is beyond the realms of practical inquiry.

The second white piece (Plate I, fig. 1), is of an entirely different character, though, if the truth were known, it too may have been a product of the Ting kilns. It is in the form of a small discoid jar with the foot slightly larger than the mouth. The body clay of stoneware is so nearly that of true porcelain that it turns the steel of the knife which tests it. The glaze is thick and unctuous, though the greater part of the surface is dulled by the microscopic scratches due to burial. Most significant of all, the glaze is perfectly opaque

¹Described in the *Pennsylvania Museum Bulletin*, February, 1922, No. 70.



FIG. 1

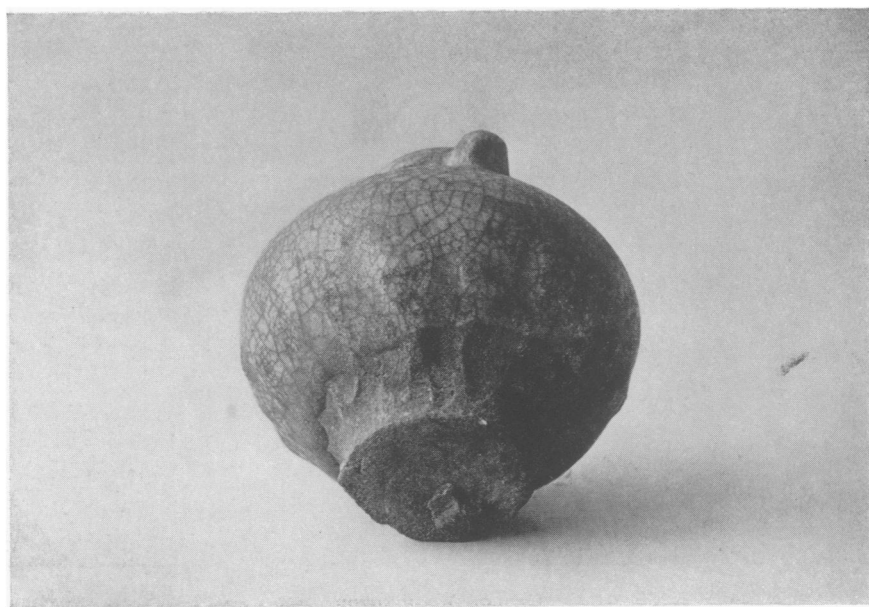


PLATE I

and white without the adventitious aid of a slip between it and the body. This white, when compared with the familiar Ting and Tu Ting glazes, contains no element of yellow and can not, by any stretch of the imagination, be described as "creamy."

Hobson tells us that "Ting ware has a white body of fine grain and compact texture, varying from a slightly translucent porcelain to opaque porcelainous stoneware. . . . The finer and whiter varieties are known as *pai ting* (white Ting) and *fen ting* (flour Ting) as distinct from the coarser kind, whose opaque, earthy body and glaze of yellowish tone, usually crackled and stained, earned it the name *t'u ting* or earthen Ting."

Mr. Worcester's piece is not "fine" in the sense of being thin or light in weight. But the body-clay and the glaze are fine in both senses of the word. Further, the three solitary cracks in the glaze at the shoulder are precisely what the Chinese call "crab-claw" in character in spite of the fact that in this case they happen to be parallel instead of divergent, and there are characteristic "tear drops" in the glaze. In the minds of certain Chinese collectors these facts in themselves would be sufficient to determine the period as Sung. For my own part I do not doubt that the jar was produced at least as early as the thirteenth century, and am inclined to believe that it may be as early as the eleventh; the small size and almost disproportionate strength of the walls, as well as its squat ovoid shape account for its preservation. In offering this opinion I do not attempt to attribute a name to the ware, although the weight of evidence seems to point to one of the varieties of Ting. In this connection it is worth noticing that a Chinese connoisseur, in whose judgment I have much faith, after close examination, suggested that this might be an example of "white celeston" from the kilns of Lung-chuan.

The two next examples I am inclined to consider together in spite of the fact that they are sufficiently unlike in appearance. One (Plate II, fig. 5) is a jug three inches high, on the shoulder of which are two dragons and two flaming balls or jewels. The design is familiar enough up to the present day and no doubt originated before it was appropriated by Buddhism. It is especially associated with the large burial jars of the south coast of China and the islands which were dependent on that region for their culture if not for their population. Mr. Fay-Cooper Cole and Doctor Laufer in their important pamphlet¹ do not describe the large burial jars brought from the Philippines by Mr. Cole from a ceramic point of view, but it may be that Mr. Worcester's is a small edition of the same thing. The glaze is thin olive brown covered with a fine net craze which, together with its texture gives it the look of badly checking varnish.

¹*Chinese Pottery in the Philippines*, Field Museum of Natural History, Publication 162, July, 1912.

The bare foot shows a light gray clay of great hardness. The decorations were no doubt made in moulds and applied to the surface of the jar before baking.

The second jar is four inches high and, in shape, suggests the dragon jars illustrated by Laufer and Cole on plates VI, VII and VIII, though the latter are huge in comparison. Here again the glaze is brown and, on examination, crazed like bad varnish though the greenish tinge is lacking. The inside of the jar and the curling lip are translucently glazed showing the worn gray color of the bare clay.

The third group consists of two small coarse jugs or jars, one with a pair of rudimentary handles at the neck, the other without. (Plate 1, figs. 1 and 3.) The thick glaze of each is covered with a fine network of crackle. It is the same glaze on each, a mutton-fat white with a greenish cast where it runs thick. Although this pair cannot be put into any of the better known categories of Chinese wares, there can be little doubt that they are Chinese and that they date from the later years of the T'ang dynasty or the early part of the Sung, perhaps the tenth century.

Last and most interesting of all are three pieces of pottery which are quite strange to the student of the wares of China proper, and by such students have been supposed to be Japanese. It is obvious however, that they have no connection with any of the known Japanese wares which have received centuries of careful study and are better described and catalogued than those of perhaps any other country. They are founded on a hard coarse-grained ware of sandy consistency, non-sonant, perfectly opaque and tough, though brittle. Under the glaze they are painted with blue or greenish-brown designs. If we cannot ascribe them a date or a kiln name we can at least point to the fact that the Cochin China coast, opposite the islands where these examples were dug up, is full of such wares. Few have come to Europe and America, but the little Museum at Hanoi and the houses of the private collectors in those parts contain great numbers of specimens. Of the three, two are thickly covered with a greenish-white fine crackled glaze and the third is a covered jar like the metal beetle nut boxes and the reliquaries of an earlier Buddhist period which has a thin varnish of olive-green glaze above a brown decoration of cross-hatching and flowers in vertical panels.

On the top of the cover is a knob, obviously true to the metal conception of the whole. For a moment our wisest plan is to put these pieces in a group by themselves and reserve judgment on their period and exact *provenance* until they have been passed upon by the French savants of Cochin China who are familiar with such wares. At the very least they are important as a hint of the trade across the sea which was not confined to the products of the North China that we know. They are doubtless from Cochin-China or Siam.